



**Information Resource Center  
American Embassy Buenos Aires**

## **AMERICAN SOCIETY ALERT SERVICE Number 2, 2005**

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● **MEASURING THE MIDDLE: ASSESSING WHAT IT TAKES TO BE MIDDLE CLASS**  
Jennifer Wheary  
Demos. 2005

"A new Working Paper from Senior Fellow Jennifer Wheary, Measuring the Middle is the first step in a larger endeavor to track and measure America's middle class. In this paper, we outline the characteristics that contribute to middle class access and stability - such as homeownership and education level. To begin assessing the major trends affecting America's middle class, particularly the ability of households to enter into it, we offer a rudimentary Middle Class Security Index."

[http://www.demos.org/pubs/measuring\\_the\\_middle\\_highres.pdf](http://www.demos.org/pubs/measuring_the_middle_highres.pdf) [pdf format, 19 pages]

● **WHO LIVES DOWNTOWN?**  
Metropolitan Policy program, The Brookings Institution. November 2005

An analysis of downtown population, household, and income trends in 44 selected cities. Some of the findings are:

- \* During the 1990s, downtown population grew by 10 percent, a marked resurgence following 20 years of overall decline.
- \* From 1970 to 2000, the number of downtown households increased 8 percent—13 percent in the 1990s alone—and their composition shifted. Households grew faster than population in downtowns.
- \* Downtowns are more racially and ethnically diverse than 20 years ago.
- \* In general, downtowns boast a higher percentage of both young adults and college-educated residents than the nation's cities and suburbs.
- \* Downtowns are home to some of the most and least affluent households of their cities and regions.

While this analysis demonstrates good news for overall downtown residential development, demographic, market, and social trends differ substantially from place to place. Urban leaders need to understand these patterns so they can make investment decisions that best capitalize on their unique assets.

[http://www.brookings.edu/metro/pubs/20051115\\_Birch.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/metro/pubs/20051115_Birch.pdf) [pdf format, 20 pages]

● POLL: AMERICANS IDEALIZE TRADITIONAL FAMILY, EVEN AS NONTRADITIONAL FAMILIES ARE MORE ACCEPTED  
Religion & Ethics Newsweekly (PBS). October 2005

"In a recent poll on religion and the family conducted for RELIGION & ETHICS NEWSWEEKLY by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research Inc., almost three quarters of all Americans agree that 'God's plan for marriage is one man, one woman, for life.' A strong majority of Americans (71%) idealize the traditional family even as divorce, cohabitation, and nontraditional family situations are becoming more accepted across religious groups. Only 22% of Americans think that divorce is a sin and almost half (49%) say that cohabitation is acceptable. According to the survey, the growing acceptance of divorce is also occurring among religious conservatives. Only 34% of evangelical Christians and 30% of traditional Catholics say that divorce is a sin."  
<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/week908/survey.html> [html and pdf formats, various documents]

● BABY BOOMERS APPROACH 60: FROM THE AGE OF AQUARIUS TO THE AGE OF RESPONSIBILITY  
Pew Research Center. December 2005

As the oldest of the nation's 75 million baby boomers approach the age of 60, many are looking ahead to their own retirement while balancing a full plate of family responsibilities – either raising minor children or providing financial and other forms of support to adult children or to aging parents. In the past year, 50% of all boomers were raising one or more young children and/or providing primary financial support to one or more adult children, while another 17% whose only children are ages 18 and older were providing some financial assistance to at least one such child, according to the survey. In addition, the survey finds that two-in-ten boomers were providing some financial assistance to a parent. Few boomers bear all these responsibilities simultaneously; the survey finds that about 13% are providing some financial support to a parent at the same time as they are also either raising a minor child or supporting an adult child. The national survey conducted from Oct. 5 to Nov. 6 among 3,014 adults, including 1,117 boomers, looks at intergenerational relationships within families. This is the first in a new series of surveys by the Pew Research Center that examine social trends and explore the everyday lives of Americans at work, at play, in their communities and in their families.  
<http://pewresearch.org/socialtrends/socialtrends-boomers120805.pdf> [pdf format, 44 pages]

## LABOR

● DECENT WORK IN AMERICA THE STATE-BY-STATE WORK ENVIRONMENT INDEX, 2005  
Policy Economic Research Institute, University of Massachusetts-Amherst. October 2005

"The Work Environment Index (WEI)... rates working environments in all 50 states and Washington, D.C., in terms of average pay, employment opportunities, employee benefits, percentage of low-income workers, fair treatment between genders and ability for employees to unionize. It is the first index to evaluate worker climate as opposed to business climate on a state-by-state basis.... Among the states at the top of the list are Delaware, New Hampshire, Minnesota, Vermont, and Iowa, while Louisiana, Texas, Arkansas, Utah, South Carolina are ranked the lowest.... A major finding of the study is a consistent correspondence between the quality of a state's environment for workers and its economic health. States ranking high on the list generally have faster economic growth and lower poverty rates, and conversely, states at the bottom of the list tend to have slower economic growth and higher poverty rates."

<http://www.umass.edu/peri/pdfs/DWA.pdf> [pdf format, 15 pages]

## ● OLDER WORKERS: EMPLOYMENT AND RETIREMENT TRENDS

Patrick Purcell

Congressional Research Service. September 14, 2005

As the members of the "baby boom" generation — people born between 1946 and 1964 — approach retirement, the demographic profile of the U.S. workforce will undergo a substantial shift: a large number of older workers will be joined by relatively few new entrants to the labor force. According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, while the number of people between the ages of 55 and 64 will grow by about 11 million between 2005 and 2025, the number of people who are 25 to 54 years old will grow by only 5 million. This trend could affect economic growth because labor force participation begins to fall after age 55. In 2004, 91% of men ages 25 to 54 and 75% of women in this age group participated in the labor force. In contrast, just 69% of men ages 55 to 64 and 56% of women ages 55 to 64 were either working or looking for work in 2004.

[http://openocrs.cdt.org/rpts/RL30629\\_20050914.pdf](http://openocrs.cdt.org/rpts/RL30629_20050914.pdf) [pdf format, 19 pages]

## EDUCATION

## ● GRADUATE ENROLLMENT AND DEGREES: 1986 TO 2004

Council of Graduate Schools. October 2005

"The Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) announced that overall enrollment in U.S. graduate programs rose by 2% in 2004, with a total of 1.5 million graduate students enrolled. Nearly two-thirds of them were pursuing degrees at public institutions and 46% were going part time. The fields of education and business continued to enroll the largest numbers of graduate students, accounting for 21% and 16% of fall 2004 graduate enrollment, respectively.... Early indicators suggest this year's international enrollment may improve. In a related report, CGS has found that admission of international students to U.S. graduate schools rose slightly this year, by 3%, despite a 5% decrease in applications as reported by CGS in March. Still, this small increase in admissions may not offset three consecutive years of declines in first-time enrollment."

<http://www.cgsnet.org/pdf/GED2004Rep.pdf> [pdf format, 44 pages]

● **GROWING BY DEGREES: ONLINE EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES, 2005**  
The Sloan Consortium. November 2005

The 2005 Survey of Online Learning concludes that the breadth of online college courses may soon rival traditional face-to-face offerings. Survey results show more than three out of five institutions offering face-to-face undergraduate (63%) or graduate (65%) level courses also offer courses at the same level online."

[http://www.sloan-c.org/resources/growing\\_by\\_degrees.pdf](http://www.sloan-c.org/resources/growing_by_degrees.pdf) [pdf format, 30 pages]

● **ACHIEVING STATE AND NATIONAL LITERACY GOALS, A LONG UPHILL ROAD:  
A REPORT TO CARNEGIE CORPORATION OF NEW YORK**

Jennifer Sloan McCombs, Sheila Nataraj Kirby, Heather Barney, Hilary Darilek and  
Scarlett J. Magee  
RAND Corporation. 2005

RAND gathered information from the 50 states and the District of Columbia (DC) on state assessment systems and student performance on reading or English language arts and writing assessments in order to measure adolescent's (grades 4 through 12) performance toward state literacy goals. Also examines the relative performance of students against national standards represented by the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP).

Summary:

[http://www.rand.org/pubs/technical\\_reports/2005/RAND\\_TR180-1.sum.pdf](http://www.rand.org/pubs/technical_reports/2005/RAND_TR180-1.sum.pdf) [pdf format, 9 pages]

Full report:

[http://www.rand.org/pubs/technical\\_reports/2005/RAND\\_TR180-1.pdf](http://www.rand.org/pubs/technical_reports/2005/RAND_TR180-1.pdf) [pdf format, 456 pages]

## **THE INFORMATION SOCIETY**

● **TEEN CONTENT CREATORS AND CONSUMERS**

Amanda Lenhart, Mary Madden  
Pew Internet & American Life Project. November 2, 2005

American teenagers today are utilizing the interactive capabilities of the internet as they create and share their own media creations. Fully half of all teens and 57% of teens who use the internet could be considered Content Creators. They have created a blog or webpage, posted original artwork, photography, stories or videos online or remixed online content into their own new creations. Teens are often much more enthusiastic authors and readers of blogs than their adult counterparts. Teen bloggers, led by older girls, are a major part of this tech-savvy cohort. Teen bloggers are more fervent internet users than non-bloggers and have more experience with almost every online activity in the survey. Teens continue to actively download music and video from the internet and have used multiple sources to get their files. Those who get music files online believe it is unrealistic to expect people to self-regulate and avoid free downloading and file-sharing altogether.

[http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP\\_Teens\\_Content\\_Creation.pdf](http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_Teens_Content_Creation.pdf) [pdf format, 29 pages]

#### ● SELLING ONLINE

Pew Internet & American Life Project. November 2005

"Some 17% of online American adults have used the internet to sell things. That amounts to approximately 25 million Americans. In addition, internet traffic data show that visits to classified ad web sites has grown 80% in the past year. Almost everything imaginable is currently for sale or has been for sale by individuals on various auction or classified ad sites. Tangible items like pink plastic Christmas trees, collectible coins, wedding dresses, automobiles, books, or CDs share web space with a myriad of intangibles including virtual weaponry and characters from online games (sold for real money) and services including everything from finding a French tutor, a personal trainer or someone to clean your aquarium. Demographically, online sellers have an 'early adopter' profile and they are relatively intense users of the internet."

[http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP\\_SellingOnline\\_Nov05.pdf](http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_SellingOnline_Nov05.pdf) [pdf format, 5 pages]

#### ● 13 MILLION AMERICANS MADE DONATIONS ONLINE AFTER HURRICANES KATRINA AND RITA

Pew Internet & American Life Project. November 2005

"In the aftermath of the Gulf Coast Hurricanes, 13 million Americans made donations to relief efforts online and 7 million set up their own hurricane relief efforts using the internet. In addition to using the internet to respond directly to the crisis, 50% of online users sought out news and information online."

[http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP\\_Katrina.DateMemo.pdf](http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_Katrina.DateMemo.pdf) [pdf format, 6 pages]

## THE ARTS

#### ● A PORTRAIT OF THE VISUAL ARTS: MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF A NEW ERA

Kevin F. McCarthy, Elizabeth Heneghan Ondaatje, Arthur Brooks and Andras Szanto RAND. 2005

The third in a series that examines the state of the arts in America, this analysis shows, in addition to lines around the block for special exhibits, well-paid superstar artists, flourishing university visual arts programs, and a global expansion of collectors, developments in the visual arts also tell a story of rapid, even seismic change, systemic imbalances, and dislocation.

[http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2005/RAND\\_MG290.pdf](http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2005/RAND_MG290.pdf) [pdf format, 152 pages]

## ● THE DIVERSITY OF CULTURAL PARTICIPATION: FINDINGS FROM A NATIONAL SURVEY

Francie Ostrower

Urban Institute. November 2005

Those who wish to understand or expand cultural participation need to pay much greater attention to its diversity. Participation in arts and cultural events is not monolithic, though it is frequently discussed and acted upon as if it were. As one observer notes, “We often talk as if the ‘arts’ were a single thing.”<sup>1</sup> The fact is that people attend different types of cultural events for different reasons, with different people, in different places, with different experiences. Thus, if those seeking to enlarge participation are to succeed, they need to clearly define and understand the type of “culture” in which they wish to expand participation and target their strategies accordingly. This is the central conclusion from a national survey of cultural participation commissioned by The Wallace Foundation and conducted by the Urban Institute. For instance, most people who attend museums say they are strongly motivated by a desire to learn something new. This is not true of those who attend music performances or plays, for whom a primary motivation is to socialize with friends and family. Survey findings also indicate some important differences in participation among members of different ethnic groups and among frequent, moderate, and infrequent attendees. Arts organizations wishing to reach those audiences should be aware of such differences.

[http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/311251\\_cultural\\_participation.pdf](http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/311251_cultural_participation.pdf) [pdf format, 48 pages]